

# Canadian Organic Growers Cultivons Biologique Canada



## Perth-Waterloo-Wellington

### What is organic certification?

Organic certification is a third-party verification process for producers of organic food and other organic agricultural products. Any business directly involved in food production can be certified, including seed suppliers, farmers, food processors, retailers and restaurants.

Requirements vary from region to region and involve a set of production standards for growing, storage, processing, packaging and shipping that include:

- Avoidance of synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc), genetically modified organisms, irradiation, and the use of sewage sludge
- Use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for 3 years
- Developing and maintaining an audit trail including production and sales records
- Maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products
- Undergoing periodic on-site inspections

Organic certification ensures a high level of integrity along the entire production supply chain and offers consumers a high level of confidence in organic products. Increasingly, consumers are demanding, and governments are requiring, assurance of the safety of our food and water systems.

Organic certification provides complete source-to-sale traceability of organic products and provide accountability in case of contamination.

“Canadian Organic Growers encourages all farmers regardless of where they choose to market their products to consider becoming certified. Certification will provide consumers and our trading partners with the integrity and legal authority they seek. It also puts all organic farmers regardless of the size of their operation on the same team. By choosing to certify, organic farmers can support one another. COG will continue to work with governments to ensure that the process is designed with farmers in mind and that the certification process is accessible, easy to use and affordable. U.S. experience has shown that organic labels offer significant marketing advantages, even for farmers who choose to market locally. There is now widespread brand recognition of the USDA

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organic label and market research shows that consumers preferentially purchase products with the label.”

*Laura Telford, Executive Director, Canadian Organic Growers*

## **What are Organic Standards and Regulation?**

The organic sector has developed organic standards and record-keeping processes to ensure the integrity of the entire organic system – to satisfy not only our international trading partners but, more importantly, our domestic consumers.

Because the supply chain between farmer and consumer often includes several buyers and sellers, certification is intended to replace the direct face-to-face interaction between farmers and consumers and further instill trust in organic products. Each link in the supply chain must fully comply with organic standards for production, processing, storage and transportation by being certified.

To maintain organic integrity, each link in the supply chain must develop and maintain an audit trail. An audit trail will demonstrate to your customers and to the final consumer that the organic integrity of the product has been maintained all the way from field to table. Consumers now want to know as much as they can about the provenance of their food. The amount of paperwork required to maintain organic integrity varies with the type and size of operation. For good farm managers, the paperwork for certification is not much different than that for managing the operation for ongoing profitability.

The organic standards of all countries require producers to maintain records to verify organic integrity through field histories, livestock health, inputs, production, harvest, storage, shipping and sales.

When your farming operation successfully passes inspection, your Certifying Body issues an Organic Certificate. This certificate includes your name or the name of your farm, a list of certified products, as well as the specific certification program(s) that your products have certified under. Annual update forms and inspections are required to maintain your organic certification. Copies of your organic certificate may be required by commodity buyers and farmers markets.

## **What are the Organic Standards?**

The Standards are a two-volume set of guidelines developed by Canada’s organic sector and managed by the Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB). The Organic Regulation (**see What is the Organic Regulation**) make the Standards mandatory for international and interprovincial trade.

The Standards are contained in two documents: **Canadian Organic Production Systems General Principles and Management Standards CAN/CGSB-32.310** (which

will be referred to as the Standards) and **Canadian Organic Production Systems Permitted Substances List** CAN/CGSB-32.311 (referred to as the PSL).

The CGSB is the federal government organization that owns, updates and publishes the National Standards of Canada, including the Organic Standards and Permitted Substances List (PSL).

Changes to the Organic Standards can be requested by anyone through the CGSB's Committee on Organic Agriculture. Updates to the Standards are made by this committee, a group of technical experts from the organic industry that works through CGSB's consensus process to ensure the standards meet the needs of consumers, producers, general interest and regulatory groups.

Canadian Organic Growers has developed a **Guidance Document** to enable growers, processors and other stakeholders to interpret the standards quickly and easily. Contact us for more information on this document as well as our other respected publications.

## What is the Organic Regulation?

In December 2006, Canada's federal government passed the **Organic Products Regulations**, creating a national mandatory standard for organic products. The Regulation comes into full force June 30, 2009, at which time compliance with the standards is mandatory and enforceable by law. The Organic Products Regulations applies to inter-provincial and international (import and export) trade.

The Regulation governs the use of the word "organic" and the Canada Organic designation and logo. Anyone wishing to use the word "organic" on products for cross-border trade (across provinces or outside Canada) must comply with the Regulations and Standards by June 30, 2009.

## What is the Organic Logo?

The "biologique Canada Organic" logo may be used on products that comply with the Regulations, but use of the logo is not mandatory. Alternately, the designations "Canada Organic" and "Biologique Canada" may be used. While use of the logo is not mandatory, complying with the regulation is. Certified producers and processors may use the logo when certified, along with the wordmark or logo of the CB. Imported products must also indicate the country-of-origin, and this indication must be placed near the "Canada organic" logo.

For most Canadian consumers, the Canada Organic logo will greatly simplify the process of navigating labels and product claims. Use of this logo will likely become widespread as the Canadian public becomes aware of it and begins to actively seek it out.

More information about certification, standards and regulations can be obtained in **COG Practical Skills Book: Record Keeping**.